

THE CONJURORS OF OLD.
The medium of the present day bears a closer resemblance, in methods of history and manipulations, to the well-known conjurer of history, than any other representative of the magic art. How far short he still remains of the performances of his prototypes is illustrated below. In 1615 a delegation of highly educated and distinguished men from the English East India Company visited the Emperor Schangri. While on their mission they witnessed many most wonderful performances, almost causing them to discredit solution. A party of Bengalese conjurers and jugglers, showing their art before the Emperor, were desired to produce upon the spot, and from seed, ten mulberry trees. When a seed was planted tiny leaves appeared, at once followed by slender shoots, which rapidly gained elevation, putting out leaves and twigs and branches, finally spreading wide in the air, budding, blossoming and yielding fruit, which matured upon the spot, and was found to be excellent. And this before the beholder had turned away his eyes. Fig, almond, mango and walnut trees were at the same time under like conditions produced, yielding the fruit which belonged to each. Wonder succeeded wonder. The branches were filled with birds of beautiful plumage, flitting about among the leaves and singing sweet notes. The leaves turned to russet, fell from their places, branches and twigs withered, and finally the trees sank back into the earth out of which they had all sprung within an hour.

The same conjurers performed a series of wonders. One of them produced a chain fifty cubits in length. One end of this he threw into the air, when the chain rapidly ran out its whole length, and remained fixed in the air as if fastened against the sky. A dog was then placed upon the chain when up he ran to the further end and at once disappeared heavenward. A hog, a panther and other large animals were successfully dispatched through this aerial pathway, and each in turn disappeared from the far end. Nor were they seen again; and finally the chain was withdrawn and placed in a bag or convenient carriage.

Another had a bow and about fifty steel-pointed arrows. He shot an arrow into the air, when lo! the arrow became fixed in space, at a considerable height. Another and another arrow was sent off, each fixing itself in the shaft of the preceding, until all formed a chain of arrows in the air, excepting the last shot, which, striking the chain, brought the whole to the ground in disentanglements.

They set up two comm-tents facing each other, and about a bowsprit apart. These tents were critically examined by the spectators, or are the cabinets of the mediums, and pronounced empty. The tents were fastened to the ground all around. The lookers-on were then invited to choose what animals or birds they would have issue from these tents to engage in a battle. Kuan-hsia-han, incredulously asked to see fight between ostriches. In a few minutes an ostrich came out from each tent, rushed to combat with deadly earnestness, and from them blood soon began to stream, but they were so nearly matched that neither could win the victory, and they were at last separated by the conjurers and conveyed within the tents. After this the varied demands of the spectators for birds or beasts were easily complied with, always with the whole to the ground in disentanglements.

They took a man and apparently severed limb from limb, actually at last cutting off his head as it appeared. They scattered these members along the ground for a considerable distance, and allowed them to remain for some time. Gathering them together, they spread over these remains a sheet, under which one of the jugglers crawled, and soon came out followed by the men who had been discovered, not sound in every part. Neither was there to be found about the place any trace of the thing that had been done.

A large cauldron was set, and into it a quantity of rice thrown. Without the sign of fire this rice soon began to boil, and out from the cauldron was taken more than one hundred patters of cooked rice, with a stewed fowl at the top of each. This trick is performed on a smaller scale by the most ordinary fakirs of the present day.

But space fails to give opportunity for illustrating, from the records of the past, how the miserably tame performances—by comparison—of the mediums of the present day were pale and overshadowed by those of other days and more adroit peoples. There is not a wonderful feature in any of the so-called phenomena or manifestations which was not, nay, which is not now more than duplicated by other skilful performers, whose connection with earth, and earth alone, is too evident to be doubted, even if the fact was not supported by their own testimony.

MINERAL WOOL.

Considerable interest is manifested in the new product known as "mineral wool," an article that has all the appearance of wool, although it does not come from the sheep's back. This wool is the product of the blast-furnaces. Furnace-men have always noticed the occurrence of fibrous silica in cavities in the walls of the hearths of blast-furnaces, and also in the tuyeres; and an instance of the so-called volatility of slack at high temperatures was recorded as having taken place in potter's kiln, through which a large stream was allowed to pass. This matter is known under various names, such as "dross glass," "mineral wool," "slag wool," "silicate cotton," and "vitreous fibre." In the Sandwiche Islands the wool is made from material formed in one of the craters, and by the action of air-currents from the same. This furnace slack or waste is now put through a process of manufacture, and it bids fair to become a most important item in the world's commerce. The product is made, as stated above, of various grades. Some of it is coarse and dark colored, but it can be made as purely white and clean as real wool. Its great feature is its incombustibility—as it will not burn—and the fact that moisture and dampness have no perceptible effect upon it. Vermin avoid it. It will no doubt find many uses for which it is well adapted, and the great waste of the blast-furnaces will have a market at from two to five cents per pound.

This is a story of what happened not long since in the Pine Tree State: A new Baptist convert wished very much to be baptised by one minister, and to join the church of another. She went to the first and asked him if it could be done. "Yes," he replied. "I could do it; but I don't take in washing."

The rabbit is timid; but no cook can make it quail.

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